

ARTICLE APPROVED
ON PAGE 1-A

WASHINGTON TIMES
18 November 1985

Reagan says leak will not sabotage summit meeting

By Jeremiah O'Leary
THE WASHINGTON TIMES FOREIGN SERVICE

GENEVA, Switzerland — President Reagan meets Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev for the first time tomorrow amid a whirling controversy involving the publication of a secret letter to the president from Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger.

The president and Mrs. Reagan arrived here late Saturday to give the U.S. delegation a full day yesterday to recover from jet lag and complete preparations for the formal meetings. Mr. Gorbachev and his wife Raisa are scheduled to arrive from Moscow today.

But Mr. Reagan arrived to the accompaniment of a controversy over the leak to The Washington Post and The New York Times on the eve of Mr. Reagan's departure of a letter from Mr. Weinberger to the president — which the White House said the president had not seen — urging Mr. Reagan to hold fast to a tough line at Geneva.

The defense secretary urged Mr. Reagan to preserve his Strategic Defense Initiative and to avoid a pledge to continue adhering to the SALT II treaty.

Release of the letter set off a storm of protests and finger-pointing both here and in Washington. An official with the Reagan entourage here said the letter was an attempt to "sabotage" the summit, and a Soviet official said the leak was an effort to "torpedo" the superpower meeting.

Some in Washington saw the leak as a way to remind the president of the conservative view in his administration against compromise on arms control issues and others said it was an attempt to "discredit" Mr. Weinberger for holding that view.

But President Reagan, asked by reporters yesterday if someone was trying to sabotage the summit, yesterday replied with an emphatic, "No!"

Asked if he would fire Mr. Weinberger, Mr. Reagan replied, "Hell, no!"

When reporters continued to press the "sabotage" issue, Mr. Reagan said, "I'm wondering if that individual who used

the term is not a figment of someone in the press' imagination."

As to the letter itself, press spokesman Larry Speakes said, "The president would have preferred to read it in the privacy of the Oval Office rather than read it in The New York Times."

The Soviets were quick to react.

Georgy Arbatov, a chief Kremlin adviser on American affairs, said of the Weinberger letter, "If it is true what he is saying, it is a direct attempt to torpedo the arms control process."

At a press conference Sunday, Mr. Arbatov said the letter confirms Soviet suspicions that the administra-

tion is "trying to disrupt the whole structure" of arms control.

White House Chief of Staff Donald T. Regan, who rarely talks to reporters on the record, said the now-renowned Weinberger letter to President Reagan "in no way has torpedoed the summit. The Soviets already knew that President Reagan had said he would not undercut observance of the SALT II treaty until the U.S. knows the extent of Soviet violations."

Mr. Regan said Secretary Weinberger came to his office Friday and said the leaking of his letter to the President was "reprehensible" and that he was launching an investigation.

National Security Adviser Robert C. McFarlane attempted yesterday to minimize the importance of the flap over the letter.

"I don't think it is helpful to comment on leaks," he said. The letter, which was accompanied by the latest compilation of Soviet violations of SALT II, was prompted apparently, he added, by the administration decision last June not to undercut the unratified treaty.

"The SALT agreement will be honored as long as the Soviets are in compliance," Mr. McFarlane said. "The president has not read the latest Pentagon estimates on Soviet violations. He will make a judgment in Washington after these meetings.

Secretary Weinberger's sentiments are well known and have been made public."

Secretary of State George P. Shultz, appearing on NBC's "This Week with David Brinkley," added that the disclosure was a "relatively minor example" of leaks from the government.

Nevertheless, the administration was embarrassed and angered by the leak, coming just before the meetings of the superpower leaders. Mr. Reagan is expected to decide in December whether the volume of Soviet violations is good cause for the United States to cease abiding by the pact.

The letter underscored the deep divisions within the administration over arms control policy, chiefly between the State and Defense de-

partments, and how Mr. Reagan should approach the sensitive issue during his meetings here with Mr. Gorbachev.

Some officials speculated the letter was disclosed by someone in the State Department in an effort to discredit Mr. Weinberger and the tough stance he had pursued on refusing to surrender research on the SDI or to overlook purported Soviet violations of the unratified SALT II accord and the 1972 ABM treaty.

"The very real conclusion is that somebody is out to get Mr. Weinberger and his point of view," one official said.

Mr. Weinberger, an opponent of the kind of arms control strategy that some others in the administration favor, was kept off the official summit delegation, and some observers believe there may have been an element of retaliation in the motive of whoever leaked the letter.

Mr. Weinberger is widely regarded as taking the most hard-line stand against any significant compromises to get an arms control agreement with the Soviets. He has been overruled in several recent instances, including his opposition to extending the unratified SALT II agreement through the end of this year and his arguing for a broad interpretation of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty to make pos-

sible testing and development of SDI technology.

Arrayed against him on many of these issues, according to some Washington observers, are Secretary of State Shultz and chief arms control adviser Paul H. Nitze, plus the leaders of most of the West European allies who plead for progress on arms control. Mr. McFarlane plays a more ambiguous role, as they see it. He favored the broad interpretation of ABM, but also has been receptive to talk of a compromise on "star wars" and favored extending SALT II.

Mr. Weinberger is not without allies. Edward L. Rowney, a special adviser on arms control matters, is regarded as in the Weinberger camp,

secretary of defense, and Fred Ikle, an undersecretary of defense.

Mr. Shultz, Mr. Nitze and Mr. McFarlane are said to have combined to persuade Mr. Reagan to keep Mr. Weinberger off the delegation. But Mr. Rowney, Mr. Perle and Ikle all were included, making sure Mr. Weinberger's views are heard.

Mr. Speakes said the "sabotage" view was the opinion of "one individual." He said the leak would be investigated at the State and Defense departments and at the CIA.

"The investigation was called out of frustration," one official said, speaking on condition he not be identified. "The secretary would like to know who it was. It's ridiculous for him to want it out. It was very harmful to him."

While officials in Washington will continue debating the letter, officials here are trying to focus their attention on the summit meeting beginning tomorrow and Wednesday.

In meetings twice on each of the two successive days of the summit, Mr. Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev will begin a personal relationship that the president said yesterday he hoped would provide a stable relationship between the two superpowers.

A senior U.S. official told reporters President Reagan is ready in case Mr. Gorbachev comes at him in the summit in a combative or rude way.

"If the general secretary uses this style, the president will give it back in kind," he said. "Mr. Gorbachev did not use that style with French President Francois Mitterrand or British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. But we have tried to anticipate his behavior."

"The president is in good spirits, he has done his homework, he knows the issues and he's ready to go," the senior official said.

Mr. Shultz, who met with the Soviet leader in a pre-summit conference two weeks ago, said the conversation he had with Mr. Gorbachev "was the kind . . . where you interrupt back and forth." In a television interview in Geneva yesterday, Mr. Shultz described his talk with Mr. Gorbachev as a "strong, worthwhile exchange."

White House chief of staff Donald T. Regan said yesterday the Reagan administration did not come to the summit to "take cheap shots" at General Secretary Gorbachev.

He said in an interview, "We didn't come here to play a game or score minor points but to achieve serious objectives," he said. "Probably our objectives can't be scored for months to come. Our ultimate objec-

tive is that we want it to be the start of something good."

Mr. Regan said, "We're satisfied to lay our case before history, not before a Thursday morning headline as to who won and who lost."

He made the comments when reporters asked him if the United States had missed a bet by not sending teams of propagandists to Geneva a week before the summit to beat the propaganda drums. The Soviets have been saturating the 3,000 reporters here with briefings and anti-U.S. events.

"We respect the general secretary and his title," said Mr. Regan. "We are not interested in winners or losers before a summit."

Mr. McFarlane said the president's agenda includes trying to make the military balance more stable; explaining his views of bilateral issues with the hope of receiving a positive answer; and making clear his expectation that the Soviet human rights pledges made at Helsinki are expected to be kept.

"It's a welcome opportunity, and the president is hopeful," Mr. McFarlane said yesterday.

But he noted the serious U.S. problems with the Soviet arms counterproposal. In their proposed reductions of nuclear arms, he said, the Soviets would require the United States to choose between defending its allies or reaching a balance between the superpowers only.

Mr. McFarlane said the United States finds fault with the fact that some Soviet nuclear weapons systems would be excepted from reduction. The Soviets proposed a 50 percent reduction across the board, whereas the United States wants a 50 percent reduction in the most destabilizing comparable systems.

The U.S. proposal on the table is that each side should be limited to 4,500 warheads and 1,500 air-launched missile systems. Mr. McFarlane said the leaders will discuss START, Intermediate Nuclear Forces and space issues in a search for a transition from offensive to defensive dependence.

"The talks here will enable the president to take a comprehensive view of deterrence," said Mr. McFarlane. "Prior assumptions are no

longer valid. There is no balance because of the Soviet 'hard kill' capability and offensive deterrence has become even less stable.

"The Soviet arms building process has driven the U.S. to SDI. We could no longer stand by idly and watch. We cannot cope with the mobility of new Soviet missiles throughout the Soviet Union. It doesn't work if we can't count the numbers—and we cannot, under the circumstances proposed by the Soviets."

Mr. Speakes said the summit will not be judged by the amount of paper produced but on the long-term progress to make relations more stable and predictable. "This is not a substitute for negotiations, but the leaders will supply the highest level of direction," he said.

"We'll do whatever we can to find a common ground here, but we will also look for a comparable effort by the other side."

Secretary of State Shultz said success should be judged on whether the United States and Soviet Union develop a "clearer understanding" of each other's problems "with some way shown where we might make a little progress" on solving them.

He said the "most difficult issues" are "Soviet aggression in many parts of the world and the problems human beings in the Soviet Union have," especially the inability to leave their country.

"Growing armaments" and the "huge nuclear arsenals" on both sides are "big problems," he said.

"The president would like to see some way of getting them down and getting them under control, and I think what progress can be made on that in any manner, I think it will be a success," he said.

President Reagan will not give up on his plans to develop a space-based anti-ballistic missiles defense, Mr. Shultz said.

"The president is determined to find the answer to the question, 'Is it possible to construct a shield that will protect us in some measure from ballistic missiles?' . . . There is no way the president can be persuaded not to continue seek that answer," he said.